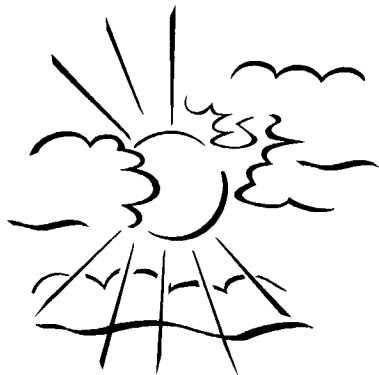


***Department
of
Human
Services***

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, November 21, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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The Detroit Free Press

Editorials

Adoption Day

Celebrate families and learn how to help kids

November 21, 2005

Tuesday is the third annual Michigan Adoption Day. That doesn't obligate people to scour the peninsulas for a homeless child, but it should serve to increase awareness of the adoption process and the tremendous appreciation due families who make this commitment.

More than 40 Michigan counties will mark the day with events to finalize adoptions, parties for adoptive families and informational open houses.

If you've ever wondered what's involved, Tuesday's the day to find out by calling the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at 800-589-6273 anytime, or going online to www.mare.org.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proclaimed November as adoption month in Michigan, and the state Supreme Court, as overseer of all Michigan courts, where adoptions are finalized, declared Tuesday Adoption Day.

"Adoptions," said Chief Justice Clifford Taylor, "are one of the few occasions when people are happy to come to court."

Justice Maura Corrigan was one of the instigators of Adoption Day, cosponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services.

DHS oversees the state's foster-care system, which includes about 4,000 children eligible for adoption.

"Adoption Day is one of the most joyous days of the year with children and adults coming together to celebrate the choice of love and to become part of a forever family," said DHS Director Marianne Udow.

The need is great. So is the commitment that's required. That's what makes the reward so great, too.

The Detroit News

November 20, 2005

Pontiac

Court to celebrate state Adoption Day

Oakland County Circuit Court judges, attorneys and advocates will come together Tuesday to finalize 20 adoptions in celebration of the third annual Michigan Adoption Day. Sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court and the Department of Human Services, Adoption Day is observed to raise awareness of the nation's nearly 120,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent homes and loving families. Activities will begin at 9 a.m. in the Commissioners Auditorium of the Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 N. Telegraph.

Macomb briefs

MOUNT CLEMENS

Adoption Day scheduled on Tuesday

The Juvenile Division of the Macomb County Circuit Court will hold a Michigan Adoption Day from 9:30 a.m. to noon Tuesday to encourage families to adopt children who are wards of the state. As part of the event, adoption hearings — which are usually closed — will be open to the public. Five families are scheduled for hearings Tuesday to adopt 11 children. The hearings will be in Judge Mark S. Switalski's courtroom at 40 N. Main, Mount Clemens.

Medicare Rx plan still raising questions

BURTON

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Monday, November 21, 2005

By Shantell M. Kirkendoll
skirkendoll@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6366

BURTON - Skeptics have become believers, but the bewildered are still scratching their heads over which plan to join to gain Medicare prescription drug coverage.

Since enrollment began Nov. 15, a majority of those who have sought one-on-one help from Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program counselors have enrolled, said a local Medicare expert.

"Advocates were skeptical about how it would work and if the savings would be there," said Lea Mix, coordinator of the MMAP program at the Valley Area Agency on Aging. "The savings have been 50 percent or more a year."

In Genesee, Lapeer and Shiawassee counties, 87,000 people receive Medicare benefits. In Michigan, 53 plans are being offered, all with various monthly costs and lists of which medicines they'll cover.

Seniors can keep their retiree health benefits to join the Medicare program, but Daimler-Chrysler has notified its retirees that if they join the program, the company will drop them, Mix said.

"Naturally the instinct is to pick the plan with the cheapest monthly premium, but you don't want to turn around and spend all that money at the pharmacist," Mix said.

"The number of mom-and-pop drugstores participating has been surprisingly good," she said.

"We don't want seniors to have to change their lifestyle to use the plan they choose."

Borden's Pharmacy in Clio has signed up with most of the plans offered to Michigan seniors, said Rosie Kellaway, billing manager for the popular independent pharmacy.

"We don't want to lose customers," she said. "If customers want to stay with us, we want to make sure we can stay with them."

Companies have contracted with Medicare to provide prescription benefits to seniors, and created plans to enroll in. Drug coverage starts Jan. 1 for those who sign up by Dec. 31.

After paying the monthly premium, seniors generally must meet a \$250 yearly deductible before the plan kicks in to pay for part of medications.

But it doesn't mean the process has been easy.

"Picking from all these plans is really confusing," said Ken Gould, 65, a retired printing company employee and volunteer firefighter.

His health insurance paid for heart surgery last year to prop open a clogged artery, but now he takes \$300 worth of medicines each month to stay well.

For that, Medicare has paid nothing. Until now, he hopes, as he walked into an information session with a MMAP counselor at the Burton Senior Activity Center Friday.

"Surely the plan I choose will be cheaper than paying the whole shot myself each month," he said.

The average person on Medicare spends \$996 of his or her own money each year on prescription drugs, according to the Michigan AARP.

Seniors have made appointments with MMAP counselors, who take as long as 20 minutes with each seniors, depending on the number of prescriptions they take.

"Some ask 'Well, what would you pick?'," said Brenda Evans, a MMAP counselor, who worked at one of eight computer stations at the Burton center. "And we can't do that for them."

Many like Armeta Eneix of Flint do not have a computer at home to use Web-based calculators and search engines to pick a plan using the Medicare Web site.

"I want someone else to look it over with me," said Eneix, who is in her 60s, and takes the drug Lipitor at a cost of \$74 a month.

The daughters of Marie Seneski, 85, said their mother spends nearly a third of her income on medicines.

"We've looked on the Internet to compare the plans and it's been totally confusing," said one daughter who asked not to be named. "I think they could have made it easier. This is too big a decision to mess up."

Once seniors sign up, they must stay with a plan for a year before changing. The last day to sign up without a penalty is May 15.

FROM OUR READERS: Drug benefit too confusing

November 19, 2005

Is the new government prescription drug program a boon to the insurance companies?

When using the Medicare computer program to determine my drug coverage, some showed up not covered, others needed prior approval or were denoted with an asterisk. The asterisk stated that you or your doctor need to write a letter to see if the insurance company's authorizing board would approve the drug in question. How many thousand letters will be written and how many people will be needed to resolve the asterisk questions?

The government has really created a Rubik's cube with its new prescription drug program.

Robert E. Burkett

Westland

Research is the key

A recently released Kaiser study strongly echoes concerns long raised by the Medicare Rx Education Network, senior advocates and beneficiaries about the new Medicare prescription drug benefit: education, education, education ("Many seniors say they'll skip drug plan," Nov. 11). We know that the success of any new program lies in educating the people who will benefit the most. And the new Part D insurance is no different. With the right information and guidance, everyone can get the education on Part D that he or she needs to make an informed decision. Reviewing plans with a trusted resource -- a doctor, friend or counselor -- is the best way to assess options. Then seniors can make the decision that is best for them, based on cost, coverage or convenience. With the six-month open-enrollment period (Nov. 15 to May 15, 2006) just beginning, seniors have ample opportunity to educate themselves fully about the benefit. We urge Medicare-eligible seniors to attend educational seminars, meet with trained counselors and continue to learn about this new insurance program.

John Breaux

Chairman, Medicare Rx Education Network, Washington, D.C.

Medications change

In regard to the new prescription benefit program: I have to do this for my mother, who is 87 years old and lives in a nursing home.

So, I don't get it. As I see it, we are to look up which plan covers the medication she is taking today. What about tomorrow, or next week or next year? She may be on different medicine, then what? This seems like the most obvious question, but yet I see nothing written about this.

Deborah R. Siegel

Dearborn Heights

Exorbitant prices

Why are we allowing the drug manufacturers to charge such exorbitant prices for medicine? We should not allow pharmaceutical companies to charge \$5, \$10 and even \$25-plus for a single pill! Why can we buy drugs in Canada, for instance, at half the price?

Drug manufacturers have plants throughout Canada where the exact same pills are manufactured. There's nothing illegal about ordering from there and the medicine is just as perfectly safe as it is here -- even though our government is trying to scare us into believing otherwise.

Beverly Wolfe

Northville

LETTERS

Ann Arbor News

Sunday, November 20, 2005

U.S. health care system needs radical reform

Most people agree that our health care system needs serious overhauling. Private insurance is prohibitive for thousands of people of all ages, prescription drugs are unaffordable because of the greed of the pharmaceutical companies and more and more workers are losing their benefits because many major corporations are going into bankruptcy.

In a Nov. 9 column in The News, Paul Krugman, New York Times op-ed columnist and Princeton University economist, pointed out actual figures and statistics where other countries that already have universal health care coverage have lower administrative costs for good quality care. Krugman cited an example: "Taiwan, which moved 10 years ago from a U.S.-style system to a Canadian-style-single payer system, offers an object lesson in the economic advantages of universal coverage. In 1995 less than 60 percent of Taiwan's residents had health insurance; by 2001, the number was 97 percent. ... One of these days we'll realize that our semiprivate system isn't just unfair, it's far less efficient than a straight forward system of guaranteed health insurance."

This country prides itself on being a caring and compassionate nation but neglects to correct a system which is sadly in need of radical reform - quality health care for all.

Lillian Rosinger, Ann Arbor

Adoptive Mother Accused Of Child Abuse

Couple Adopted Baby From Great Wall Of China Agency

POSTED: 3:07 pm

EST November 18, 2005

Click on Detroit4

A Rochester Hills woman has been arrested on suspicion of abusing her adopted daughter and causing the child to have severe brain damage, according to police.

The Oakland County Sheriff's office said that in the morning hours on Oct. 28, 14-month old Kaitlyn Brosch suffered severe brain damage at her home in Rochester Hills.

On Nov. 15, Kaitlyn's mother, Tracey Brosch, was charged with first-degree child abuse. Brosch, 43, and her husband, who police did not identify, adopted Kaitlyn in June of 2005 through the Great Wall of China adoption agency, based in Austin, Texas. The couple traveled to China to adopt Kaitlyn, according to police. They have no other children.

Brosch was alone with Kaitlyn in their home when the incident occurred, according to a release from the Oakland County Sheriff.

Brosch took the infant to a local doctor and said the infant was having difficulty breathing and that she was unable to awaken her. The doctor began life-saving procedures and called for emergency medical transport. Kaitlyn was transported to Crittenton Hospital, then to Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital, where she was taken to surgery to relieve pressure on her brain.

Kaitlyn suffered the effects of a "shaken baby." She has severe brain damage, is blind, almost totally paralyzed, and suffers seizures.

On Nov. 9, a hearing was held in Oakland County Probate Court to terminate parental rights for both Brosch and her husband. Their rights were suspended pending a full hearing. Neither set of grandparents is willing or able to care for Kaitlyn, according to the sheriff's office. She will be placed with a state foster home upon leaving the hospital.

Brosch has been charged with one count of first-degree child abuse, a 15-year-felony by the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office.

She was arraigned in Rochester Hills and bond was set at \$75,000 cash, which Brosch posted Friday.

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Adopted daughter shaken; mother arrested

Web-posted Nov 19, 2005

By KORIE WILKINS

Of The Oakland Press

ROCHESTER HILLS - Only months after she arrived from China as the adopted daughter of a Rochester Hills couple, little Kaitlyn Brosch lies in a hospital bed, partially paralyzed, deaf and blind after police and prosecutors say she was severely shaken by her mother.

Tracey Brosch, 43, was charged earlier this week with first-degree child abuse, a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Her husband won't face charges because authorities say he was not home at the time of the alleged incident.

"This is a horrible crime," said Lt. Ray White of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office. "This is a beautiful little girl."

According to authorities, Brosch took Kaitlyn, who is 14 months old, to a doctor Oct. 28. White said the baby girl - who was adopted in June - suffered injuries that led to blindness, paralysis and seizures.

"She can only move her toe and a finger," said Chief Deputy Oakland County Prosecutor Deborah Carley.

Brosch allegedly told the doctor that Kaitlyn was having trouble breathing and that she could not wake the baby.

The doctor began life-saving procedures on Kaitlyn and called 9-1-1. Kaitlyn was rushed to Crittenton Hospital and then Royal Oak's William Beaumont Hospital, where she remains. She has had surgery to relieve pressure on her brain. Brosch's attorney, Jon Posner, said Kaitlyn's injuries could be a result of many different things. He said his client is trying to remain strong but misses her daughter.

On Nov. 9, the parental rights of Brosch and her husband - who has not been charged with a crime so his name is not being released - were suspended after a Nov. 9 hearing.

"We, very lovingly but adamantly, deny these allegations," Posner said.

Neither Kaitlyn's maternal or paternal grandparents can care for the baby girl, so she will be placed in foster care after she is released from the hospital, said White.

The Brosches have no other children. They had traveled to China to pick up Kaitlyn.

On Friday, Brosch was freed after she posted a \$75,000 bond. She will face a hearing on Monday before Rochester Hills district court Judge Nancy Tolwin Carniak.

CHILD ABUSE CASE

Woman charged with shaking baby daughter

A Rochester Hills woman has been charged with first-degree child abuse after police say she shook her 14-month-old daughter so severely she left the child brain-damaged, blind and partially paralyzed.

Tracey Brosch, 43, was arraigned on the charges in 52nd District Court in Rochester Hills Friday and was released on a \$75,000 cash bond. A not guilty plea was entered on her behalf.

The baby remained hospitalized Friday. Brosch faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

By L.L. Brasier

Teen tells of sex and physical abuse in adoptive home

Saturday, November 19, 2005

By John Agar
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- On her second night with her newly adoptive parents, the then-8-year-old girl took five lashes from a leather belt.

Before the month was out, she said she was molested by an older child in the house. She said it happened frequently over the next five years, but her parents did not believe her.

Now 17, she never wants to go back.

"I would be scared to return there," she testified Friday at a hearing that sets the stage for Beryl and Jerome Richards -- once the state's adoptive parents of the year -- to lose parental rights to 12 of their adopted children.

Testimony is to resume Monday, with a jury to decide if Kent County Family Court Judge Nanaruth Carpenter should have jurisdiction over the children. Carpenter could terminate parental rights to the children, who now are in foster homes.

The 17-year-old recalled sexual assaults by older children in the home and once being tied to a bed. She recalled spankings with belts and extension cords, forced fasting as punishment, and standing in a corner, motionless, for hours.

Her testimony brought anger and tears to some. Dematric Davis, the biological mother of six of the adopted children, glared at the adoptive couple during a recess.

Someone took Davis' arm and led her to the courthouse hallway, where she wept.

Denise Griffin, whose 6-year-old biological twin grandsons lived with the Richardses, understood.

"It hurts. It hurts real bad to let my grandkids suffer like that," Griffin said. "They ought to be in jail."

The court hearing is to determine custody, and the couple is not charged with any crime.

The defense acknowledged the couple were strict disciplinarians but said their punishments were consistent with Biblical teachings.

Attorney Kevin Cronin suggested the children exaggerated or lied.

While the 17-year-old said the couple ignored her complaints of sexual assault, Cronin said the couple took steps to stop abuse.

He said the girl wanted to live with her foster mother.

"(She) can only do that if Mr. and Mrs. Richards are out of the picture," Cronin said.

He asked the girl: "As you sit here today, do you think some of your positive attributes are as a result of guidance ... and encouragement the Richards gave you?"

She responded: Yes.

An attorney for the children said the couple were motivated by \$100,000 a year in state subsidies for the children. The 17-year-old said the couple did not accept the adopted children as their own.

"Mrs. Richards told us we needed to accept the fact we were adopted, and not her biological children, and not make up lies," she testified.

Dr. N. Debra Simms, a child-sex abuse expert, examined the 6-year-old twin brothers. One was sad and depressed and didn't want to talk.

He had "an extremely large number of well-healed scars and abrasions," Simms said. "In fact, there were so many of them, it would be impossible to plot them on a skin diagram."

Soccer Coach Accused Of Luring Children

League Says Background Check Was Performed

POSTED: 9:14 am EST

November 18, 2005

Click On Detroit 4

NOVI, Mich -- A Novi soccer coach was arrested for what the Oakland County prosecutor's office called "immoral purposes" involving children.

David Thomas Turner (pictured, right), 46, of White Lake Township, was charged with two counts of accosting and soliciting a minor for immoral purposes on Oct. 26, according to the prosecutor's office. Turner is accused of trying to lure a 10-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy into his van in September near the Westgate apartment complex, located near Pontiac Trail and West Park Drive, according to prosecutors.

"She saw what she believed to be a bed in the back of the van. He told her she had to hurry up and get in real quick to prevent the bugs from getting in," said Novi Police Chief David Molloy about the girl's alleged encounter with Turner.

Turner has decades of youth soccer coaching experience, Local 4 reported. He currently coaches with the Huron Valley Soccer League.

Chris Hainey, of the CW3 Extreme Soccer Club, said he has known Turner for years as a director of a competing soccer league.

"He's done great things for the game of soccer here, particularly with kids, youth soccer," said Hainey.

Hainey said his 13-year-old daughter was recently trained by Turner. He said his daughter and other children that trained with Turner have "all improved and all enjoyed their soccer experience with him."

The soccer league and police have found no indication of wrongdoing on the soccer field, Local 4 reported.

Officials from the Novi soccer league said they perform background checks and Turner did not have a record, Local 4 reported.

Turner was held on \$100,000 bond, Local 4 reported.

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Girl Calls 911 To Report Man In Hockey Mask

Police, School Officials On Alert

POSTED: 1:08 pm EST November 18, 2005

A 12-year-old girl called 911 to report being chased by a man wearing a hockey mask at a school bus stop in Ypsilanti Township Thursday afternoon.

"I was so afraid. I didn't know what to do," said the girl, whose name was not released, to 911 dispatchers.

The incident occurred just before 4 p.m. on Lagoon Street, near Huron River Drive and Tuttle Hill, according to the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department. The man approached several kids at the bus stop, and chased after the Lincoln Middle School student, according to the sheriff's department.

"There was a man that got out of a green van and was chasing me," the girl told 911 dispatchers. The man was described as black, about 6 feet 2 inches tall, with a slim build and long, gray hair. He was wearing a black, plastic hockey mask, a black hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans and white Nike tennis shoes, the sheriff's department reported.

The man was seen driving a dark-colored -- possibly green -- full-size van. The girl obtained a partial Michigan license plate number on the van of "X12," according to investigators.

The sheriff's department alerted other area police departments and Lincoln Consolidated Schools officials.

Anyone with information should contact the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department at (734) 971-8400.

INTERNET STING

Man sent sex messages to 13-year-old, cops say

A 40-year-old Auburn Hills man — who police said used an Internet chat room to arrange a meeting with someone he thought was a 13-year-old girl — had a semiautomatic pistol in his pocket when he was arrested, the Wayne County Sheriff's Department said Friday.

Troy Martin was arrested Thursday at an undisclosed location in Macomb County by Wayne County sheriff's deputies.

Martin sent sexually explicit messages, including pictures of himself, to a sheriff's deputy posing as an underage girl on Nov. 7 and Nov. 17, Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans said.

Deputies found 18 more firearms when they searched his home — including two sawed-off shotguns, which are illegal to possess. Martin was arraigned Friday and a plea of not guilty was entered for him.

He was being held in lieu of 10 percent of \$150,000 bond, pending a Dec. 1 court date.

By Jack Kresnak

Published November 21, 2005

Monday update: Shelter for abused kids will open Dec. 22

Donations of \$1.1M financed Angel House

Lansing State Journal

MASON - The Angel House, a shelter for neglected and abused children in Ingham County, will open Dec. 22, just in time for Christmas.

Five months after the scheduled June opening, Angel House Director Jerre Cory said the group got enough donations to open the \$1.1 million building on the northwestern edge of Mason.

"We're really happy this is happening the week of Christmas," Cory said.

"The need is so great, and we've been waiting so long."

The shelter will house up to 15 children in a home setting where they can receive medical care and be interviewed by counselors or law enforcement officials, if necessary.

Angel House will coordinate with the Child and Family Services with eight Ingham County law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor's office and the Family Independence Agency to help children in Ingham County.

Cory said Angel House is in the process of raising operational funds, including a contract for 11 to 15 shelter beds and a \$50,000 grant for a crisis counselor.

"(Angel House) will help reduce the stress on workers and police," Cory said.

Published November 20, 2005

[From the Lansing State Journal]

Franz: State fails to combat 'disease' of teen killing

Focus on juvenile killers' sentences misses how such problems develop

Once again, debate over juvenile murderers being sentenced to life without parole is making headlines.

Should a 17-year-old be treated as an adult for sentencing purposes? Are juveniles who commit adult crimes given a fair chance for rehabilitation?

Once again, we are asking the wrong questions and ignoring the more complex and difficult issue: Why are so many Michigan juveniles committing murder and what should we be doing to stop it?

Michigan prosecutors see the constant parade of families who have lost a child, a father, a brother, a sister, a mother, a husband at the hands of juvenile murderers. We hear the pleas of communities, law enforcement personnel and neighborhood leaders to protect their residents and keep their streets safe. We know it is a terrible loss when a young person enters adulthood on the wrong side of a prison cell.

The debate over how to deal with juveniles who commit adult crimes rarely reaches the crux of the issue - the fact that as voters and public officials we have been unwilling to redirect funding to stop the proliferation of juvenile murderers.

We have hard evidence that early intervention programs work. We can recognize early signs in children who are heading for serious trouble. But we do little to stop the inevitable progress of some children to greater levels of violence.

Juvenile murder is a disease. Its symptoms begin to surface in our elementary schools and neighborhoods. Its sores erupt when children try to survive in violent homes, where substance abuse and drugs are common.

It festers in communities that lack adequate resources for children to learn and grow.

But it's a disease that can be treated, if we pay attention at the early stages.

Prosecutors across Michigan are active participants in the development and implementation of juvenile crime prevention efforts. We work with law enforcement, child advocates, school officials and legislators on programs and policies to help prevent juvenile violence.

We need the support of every community in Michigan to stem the tide of juvenile crime.

Yes, we face difficult decisions when sentencing juveniles who commit adult crimes. We have an obligation to protect public safety and consider the devastation of the victim's family when we make those decisions. We have an obligation to determine if a juvenile has the potential to be rehabilitated.

As young people stand before us, their young lives in the balance, we'd like to be able to turn back the clock 10 years or so and place them in a preschool program, an after school program, a domestic violence prevention program.

By the time we see them, however, it's usually too late for treatment.

Our lack of will to invest in our children is costing us dearly.

Ron Franz is Ottawa County prosecutor and president of the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan.

Michigan Report

November 18, 2005

HEARING MONDAY ON YOUTH PRISON CLOSURE

Communities surrounding the former Michigan Youth Correctional Facility will ask the Ingham Circuit Court to reopen the facility in a hearing Monday.

The communities and GEO Group, owner and operator of the facility near Baldwin, have sued the state arguing that it did not have the right to cancel the lease on the prison. The hearing Monday at 4:30 p.m. before Judge James Giddings is seeking to have the facility reopened until the trial on the state's cancellation of the management contract and lease is resolved.

Baldwin and Webber Township have sued to keep the facility open, keeping promised jobs in the communities and using infrastructure the communities built specifically to support the prison. GEO has sued to at least maintain lease payments on the facility, arguing Governor Jennifer Granholm's veto of the specific line item for the prison was not enough to absolve its responsibilities under the lease.

The state plans to make its final lease payment next month when the 60-day notice of lease cancellation runs. The Department of Corrections had removed all the prisoners before the cancellation notice on the management contract ran last month.

Corrections spokesperson Russ Marlan said the department had hired 190 of the guards laid off by GEO Group effective November 7. The department tried to keep the 20 percent of those guards living in Lake County as close to home as possible, placing many at the Pugsley Facility near Kingsley. Others, he said, were transferred as far away as prisons in the Upper Peninsula.

GEO Group Vice President Wayne Calabrese told Gongwer News Service the company is still hoping to reopen the facility, whether under its own management or under state management.

"We're continuing our efforts to market the facility, but we're also making efforts to bring to everybody's attention that we still believe the best use of this facility is to reopen this facility as a state facility," Mr. Calabrese said. He noted that, by continuing the lease, the state also retains the option to purchase the prison.

"It is a very valuable piece of infrastructure for the state of Michigan," he said, adding that GEO would be able to structure lease and management payments to match the costs of state-owned facilities to keep it open.

And he said reopening the Baldwin facility would make more financial sense than reopening one of the state's mothballed prisons as prisoner populations grow. He noted one Corrections report that indicated a need for 500 new beds by summer.

But Mr. Marlan said the report Mr. Calabrese quoted is out of date. Under the department's latest budget, which included many of the proposals made for reducing prison intake, the department was not expecting to run out of beds until March 2008.

"We are done and out," Mr. Marlan said. "We are not in any discussions with them to continue to use the facility."

Apparently neither are any other corrections agencies. Mr. Calabrese said he has met with local, state and federal officials around the country and has not yet been able to interest anyone in moving prisoners to rural northern Michigan.

District judge appointed to domestic violence panel

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Sunday, November 20, 2005

By Paul Janczewski
pjanczewski@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6333

Flint District Judge Nathaniel C. Perry III has been appointed to the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board by Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm. The appointment was effective Nov. 9 and his term on the board will run through September 2007.

"I'm proud to serve on this board and pleased the governor has confidence in me," Perry said. According to a news release from Granholm's office, the board is responsible for administering state and federal funding for domestic violence shelters and advocacy services. It also aids in developing and recommending policy, as well as providing technical assistance and training.

Monday, November 21, 2005

9 days, 3 murders in Warren

Police believe the unrelated deaths of two teens, 42-year-old woman were result of domestic violence.

By David Josar / The Detroit News

WARREN -- Police on Sunday recorded what they say is their third domestic violence death in nine days in this city as they investigated the slaying of a woman allegedly at the hands of her live-in boyfriend.

Mental health professionals say this type of violence is likely to increase as stress mounts in people's lives, from worrying about money to concern over holiday visits.

"If someone is losing a job or having problems paying the bills, that could cause more blow-ups," said family therapist Amy Ashe.

According to the Okemos-based Michigan Resource Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 21 percent of Michigan women with a partner reported suffering some type of violence in that relationship.

Stress normally increases over the holidays, Ashe said, whether it is due to family pressures or fiscal woes. "This is a tough time," she said.

According to police, the body of the 42-year-old woman, who had been shot in the head, was found about 6:30 a.m. Sunday in a bedroom in her flat at the Regency Apartments on Hoover, south of 12 Mile.

Warren Capt. Jere Green said her boyfriend called the police to report the incident and was taken into custody. Police declined Sunday night to release the victim and suspect's names. Green said the boyfriend was expected to be charged today.

This was the second murder in a week at the apartment complex. On Friday, the body of Heaven La-Talier, 14, a freshman at Warren Woods Tower High School, was discovered in a Dumpster at the Regency Apartments. Later, a 16-year-old boy who also lived at the Regency was arrested in connection with her death.

An autopsy Saturday found she had been strangled. Police did not identify the boy because he is a minor, but said he was expected to be charged today in 37th District Court with murder and first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Neighbors reported hearing an argument before her body was discovered.

Stress is a growing concern in the Motor City mobile home park in Warren, where police say a 21-year-old man killed his girlfriend in front of their child Nov. 12.

"This guy's car broke down, this guy's girlfriend left him, this guy is being hassled by creditors," Derrick Mason said as he worked on his late-model Buick. "I think everyone wants to snap sometime, but you just gotta take a break and count to five."

So far this year, Warren has recorded five homicides; three came since Nov. 12.

In 2004, according to the FBI, the city had six homicides; in 2003, there were three in this city of about 135,500 people.

Outside the Regency Apartments on Sunday, residents said they were surprised at the slayings in a community of rental units they described as "close-lipped," but added they don't feel unsafe.

"I feel horrible what happened to the women, but I'm not worried about crime here," said resident Richard Wetter, 64. "I love Warren. Warren is a safe place."

Henry Aziz, 49, said he knew the girl whose body was found in the Dumpster. "Everyone is upset. We don't know what to make of this. But this is our home," said Aziz, who works in the wholesale business.

The string of homicides began Nov. 12, when, police say, Joe Duncil, 21, allegedly shot to death Nicole Hirth, 17, at their Motor City mobile home park trailer in front of the couple's son, Xander.

Duncil is charged with murder in Hirth's death and is jailed pending a preliminary examination.

You can reach David Josar at (313) 222-2073 or djosar@detnews.com.

Published November 20, 2005

[From the Ingham County Community News]

EVE seeks support for program

LANSING — Victims of domestic violence and their children are in need of support this holiday season through the Adopt-A-Family program.

The families are currently receiving services from EVE, Inc., formerly the Council Against Domestic Assault.

Some of the families are receiving shelter and others are non-residents who are participating in EVE's outreach programs.

Advertisement

EVE's House provides shelter, counseling, support groups, crisis intervention, a 24-hour crisis line and personal protection order assistance to victims of domestic violence and their children.

Mothers have completed wish lists for themselves and their children. Requests typically include household items, clothes and toys.

Currently, EVE has about 50 families in need of adoption for the Adopt-A-Family program.

For more information about EVE, Inc., or to contribute to Adopt-A-Family, contact Julie West at (517) 372-3382, ext. 17.

MIRS

November 18, 2005

\$10 Million For Chronic Homelessness

Organizations fighting chronic homelessness simulated the winter homeless experience as they made several onlookers stand in the 21-degree weather while they discussed new funding to fight chronic homelessness.

"We sit here freezing and shaking, but these are the conditions the homeless deal with every day," said Patrick **PATTERSON**.

Patterson is vice president of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), which recently approved \$10 million in state and federal money to help eight communities create permanent housing programs for the chronically homeless.

A person is considered chronically homeless if they've lived in the street or in a shelter for at least a year, said Michael **DeVOS**, executive director of MSHDA.

Approximately 6,000 to 8,000 of Michigan's 30,000 homeless people, about 15-20 percent, are chronically homeless.

Many of them are war vets or have mental illness.

Detroit will receive \$3 million for the 14,000 homeless people in the city. Each of the following cities will each get \$1 million: Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, Flint, Lansing, Muskegon, Pontiac and Saginaw.

The communities were selected according to the number of shelters they have, the number of beds available per night, the capacity of shelters to meet the need and poverty levels in the community.

The money can be used for new construction, rehabilitation, or leasing for permanent housing for the chronically homeless.

DeVos created a statewide plan to end homelessness by the spring of 2006.

Panel discusses ways to help

Saturday, November 19, 2005

By Pat Rombyer

prombyer@citpat.com -- 768-4924

There are 259 people in Jackson County who want a permanent home but can't afford it. And that doesn't include the homeless people who stay at the home of friends or at campgrounds or simply sleep in the woods.

"That's 259 we know about," said Katrina Sims, client advocate at the Jackson Interfaith Shelter, 414 S. Blackstone St. "Homelessness is alive and well in Jackson County."

Rebekah Cook, 41, knows only too well.

Widowed a year ago and left with two boys to raise, she lives in a shelter-owned transitional house and exists on Social Security survivor benefits. She's applied for disability because of health issues.

"I could not afford rent, I'm so grateful to be here, without it we'd be on the street," Cook said.

Sims moderated a panel discussion Thursday afternoon at the shelter that included Sen. Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek; Molly Kaser, executive director of the Center for Family Health; and Diane Covell, director of family service programs at the Jackson Housing Commission.

She arrived at the number of homeless people by totaling those housed at the shelter, those living in transitional housing owned by the shelter and the Community Action Agency and the women and children housed at the AWARE Inc., an emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence. Each of the panelists deplored the lack of funds available for low-income people who can not afford housing and/or health care.

Covell said she gets calls every week from low-income people who've been evicted and are desperate for housing.

The housing commission has a years-long waiting list for its units.

"Even if we had twice the units and (Section 8) vouchers, we'd still have a waiting list," she said.

"There is not enough money available for housing or health care to meet the needs in our community."

The Center for Family Health provides medical treatment for shelter residents and neighbors in a small clinic adjacent to the shelter.

In the last year, the clinic staff treated almost 600 people.

"It's the right thing to be here, close to the shelter," Kaser said. "As a society, we do a pretty poor job of helping people."

Schauer agreed.

"A lot of folks don't like to think about homelessness, they're in denial," Schauer said.

"They don't think about people who can't make ends meet. They need to understand that many of us may be one paycheck away from poverty."

"If you were fired tomorrow, how long would it be before you lost your house or your car."

He's working at the state level to get Michigan's minimum wage raised to \$7.15 an hour, a \$2 increase.

Based on the Affordable Housing Wage, a person actually needs to earn \$13.85 an hour to afford a \$700 apartment, he said.

"Or they need to work 105 hours a week at minimum wage to pay for that apartment," he said.

Published November 20, 2005

In search of daily bread: A record number of families in Michigan use food stamps, area food banks

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

Last year, Rebecca Simonton went to a Meijer store and bought the fixings for a Thanksgiving meal for her family.

But since losing her job in October as a pharmacy technician, the now seven-months-pregnant mother of two is relying on food stamps and local charities to help feed herself and her sons, Christopher, 8, and Michael, 6.

"We were making it work last year," Simonton, 29, said earlier this month as she picked up potatoes, onions, apples and other goods outside a Lansing church. "It's so much harder now."

The number of people in the state needing government help buying groceries is at an all-time high, topping 1 million in a month for the first time since 1994. That's 11 percent of Michigan residents buying their daily bread with food stamps.

Food pantries also have been inundated, both by people supplementing the amount they get from the federal program and by people who earn too much to qualify but not enough to avoid having to make the choices between paying for housing, medicine and food. A family of three receives, on average, \$237.40 a month.

"This is a crisis situation," said Mary Meirndorf, director of the Ingham County Food Bank. "We shouldn't have to be feeding this many people."

Making matters worse: Most people helping the hungry don't expect an improvement any time soon as the economy stagnates and heating costs rise this winter.

At the same time, the record need comes as donations are down about 50 percent with most people giving this year to relief efforts for the South Asia tsunami and Gulf Coast hurricanes.

"We're in the worst of the worst situations right now," said Jane Marshall, executive director of the Food Bank Council of Michigan, a network of nine regional food banks and more than 2,500 agencies statewide.

"We're really counting on people to help us help the others."

New faces of need

A lot of those showing up at food banks and local service agencies have never needed help before. They are two-parent households, homeowners and working parents who've been affected by recent layoffs, plant closures and a tight job market.

Families like the Deans of south Lansing.

For years, Melissa and Dennis Dean sent \$25 or \$50 each holiday season to the local food bank. But both lost their jobs this summer, Melissa from a downtown cafe where she earned \$7.50 an hour, and Dennis from the Meridian Township Olive Garden where he was making minimum wage as a dishwasher.

Now, they're living on about \$1,200 a month in unemployment and disability benefits for Dennis Dean, who is deaf. They were approved for food stamps in September but receive just \$30 a month.

They don't have much else for food, though, after paying \$700 a month for rent, paying utilities, buying clothes for their growing 17-year-old son and gas to take him to school.

So instead of giving to the food bank this year, they're taking.

"It's not something we are proud of, but we wouldn't be able to make it without the food bank," Melissa Dean, 38, said a few weeks ago after picking up a load of canned goods, cereal and frozen foods at Lansing's Our Savior Lutheran Church.

Marshall said many are buckling under the burden.

"So many people have lost their jobs, their unemployment is gone and they can't make it work on a minimum-wage job," she said.

Mary Nelson, who oversees the food pantry at Haslett Community Church, said she has been surprised by the number of homeowners who have been seeking help there.

"We used to get maybe one or two homeowners a year who needed help," Nelson said. "Now, we get two or three a month."

Fewer jobs, less food

Michigan's lackluster economy is to blame. Thousands of manufacturing jobs have been lost over the past few years and replaced by low-wage service jobs. The state's unemployment rate, which has hovered around 7 percent for much of 2005, fell to 6.1 percent in October but remained above the national 5 percent.

At the same time, everyone is paying more for just about everything. Housing costs are up 21 percent to 24 percent in Michigan. Gasoline prices hit near-record levels this year before dropping recently.

And heating costs are spiking.

The state's Public Service Commission anticipates heating bills will be 46 percent higher this year.

That's left a lot of people likely to seek help in one area where they know they can get it: food.

As a result, about 45 percent of people receiving food stamps are considered the "working poor" - people with jobs who earn above the poverty level, but just barely.

Some of them might not even get help next year.

Despite objections from anti-hunger groups, the U.S. House voted Friday cut \$700 million from the Food Stamp Program as part of a broad budget bill to reduce federal spending by \$50 billion in five years. About 235,000 of the 26 million Americans receiving food stamps would lose benefits under the plan, which now goes to a House-Senate conference committee.

Officials have not determined how many state residents could be eliminated from the program. An earlier plan to end aid to 300,000 working families and immigrants would have ended benefits for some 55,000 people in Michigan.

"These are the people who will have to choose between food and heat this winter if they don't get food stamps," said Terri Winegarden, staff attorney for the Saginaw-based Center for Civil Justice, which is lobbying against any cuts.

Michigan could lose about \$1 million in federal money - the only source of funding - for the food stamp program.

"It's not like we have a strong economy here and can afford to lose money," said Don Mussen, acting director of Family Support Services for the Michigan Department of Human Services.

Help often inadequate

For many families, the food stamps run out mid-month. That's when food pantries typically see their client base double.

That's how Simonton gets by. She receives \$200 in food stamps to feed herself and her two rambunctious boys for four weeks.

She's supposed to be getting a severance package from NeighborCare, a Baltimore-based pharmaceutical service for nursing homes where she worked for five years earning \$9 an hour for filling prescription bottles, but she hasn't received anything yet.

The company's Lansing plant on Enterprise Road shut down last month after it was bought out by a competitor in July.

Simonton said she plans to start looking for a job after her daughter is born in December.

In the meantime, she's applied for cash assistance and unemployment but hasn't been approved yet. Her family is lending her money to pay the \$450-a-month rent and utilities on a two-bedroom trailer.

Deciding to get food stamps wasn't easy, Simonton said, but it was worth it.

"You have to decide what's really important," she said. "Food is important."

Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or srange@lsj.com.

1 in 9 Michigan residents rely on food stamps

1.1 million food stamp recipients in September

580,308 average number of recipients per month in 2000

\$237.40 average amount in food stamps allotted to a family of three for a month

79% recipients who do not receive cash assistance

\$896 million amount the Food Stamp Program pumped into the Michigan economy last year

Source: Michigan Department of Human Services

Published November 20, 2005

Local agencies raising funds as requests for food aid climb

Some regions in state see 25% increase in clients; rural areas no exception

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

Area food banks are counting on community support to get them through this holiday season, a time when most charities collect up to 70 percent of their annual donations.

The Food Bank Council of Michigan has set a goal of raising \$350,000 and 500,000 pounds of food through the 15th annual Michigan Harvest Gathering Campaign, which ends Thanksgiving Day. As of Thursday, the council had taken in \$260,000 and 275,000 pounds of food.

The Greater Lansing Food Bank's drive kicked off Thursday and aims to raise \$700,000 by the end of January.

But hopes are diminished this year and the need even greater. Some regions in the state are reporting a 25 percent increase in clients, according to the Food Bank Council.

The Greater Lansing Food Bank is feeding almost 5,000 people a month, compared with 4,400 a month at this time last year, said Executive Director Sharon Krinock. The Ingham County Food Bank is up by about the same proportion.

The need isn't limited to urban areas. Helping Hands of Charlotte, a rural community about 25 miles southwest of Lansing, is serving about 550 people a month, up from 450 a month last year, said Pam Hoffman, Helping Hands program director.

"Some are having to choose between paying for food, rent, medicine and heat," Hoffman said. "At least we can help them with the food."

State officials, meanwhile, are trying make sure everyone who qualifies for food stamps receives them.

An annual \$100,000 federal grant helps with outreach programs that put pamphlets in various human service agencies and helped create a toll-free hotline for people to find out if they qualify.

Since 2000, the grants have helped boost Michigan's participation rates to 10th in the nation in terms of eligible population receiving food stamps.

Still, officials said there's about 35 percent of residents who are eligible for food stamps and aren't getting them.

"We don't want anyone to go hungry," said Don Mussen, acting director of Family Support Services for the Michigan Department of Human Services.

Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or srange@lsj.com.

Metro Detroit

A growing need for giving

Katrina, economy mean agencies have more mouths to feed

November 21, 2005

BY BILL LAITNER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Agencies across metro Detroit are preparing to ensure the area's needy people have something to be thankful for come Thursday.

Hundreds will gather starting today at the Salvation Army's center in Royal Oak to claim Thanksgiving food baskets packed by teenagers from Troy.

Hundreds more will pick up frozen turkeys in Detroit, using vouchers they received after attending services Sunday at the city's largest church, the 6,000-member Greater Grace Temple on West 7 Mile.

On Thanksgiving Day, even more will file into soup kitchens for sit-down dinners.

The generosity of others annually gives a taste of turkey to those in need. But this year is a bit different because the needy people include Hurricane Katrina victims and more jobless Michiganders.

Last week at the Macomb Food Program just north of Mt. Clemens, coordinator Sue Figurski sent five turkeys to a nearby motel -- in addition to shipping 700 turkeys and thousands of pounds of fixings to dozens of churches, which are her usual customers.

The motel plans to serve a Thanksgiving meal to about 20 Katrina victims, Figurski said.

"The need is so great this year, with the economy and gasoline so high, but we also have these new people," she said.

In Pontiac, Grace Centers of Hope -- formerly Pontiac Rescue Mission -- will serve its usual 200 or so Thanksgiving meals, "to anyone who wants to come," said Kristy Bell, special assistant to Pastor Kent Clark.

But, Bell said, "we really want to focus on the Katrina victims this year. We're even providing transportation if they can't get here."

Those affected by Michigan's struggling economy make up another part of the new constituency. Augie Fernandes, president of Detroit-based Gleaners Community Food Bank, said grants and donations are down.

"We understand the horrific events down South," Fernandes said. "But every day, more of our neighbors here are facing the winds of their own poverty -- especially with the reductions in pay and the layoffs."

On Sunday, children from Temple Israel in West Bloomfield helped Gleaners prepare to feed the holiday hungry. They filled some of the 7,500 holiday food boxes for distribution at a dozen Salvation Army sites. Gleaners is southeast Michigan's largest food bank, serving 400 agencies in five counties.

At the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit, there also is a lot to do -- more work than serving the kitchen's usual 2,200 meals a day.

"We'll have about 1,300 families with children come through here on Tuesday and Wednesday -- people we've pre-identified" as receiving federal assistance, Operations Manager George Gaerig said.

They will each get a frozen turkey, stuffing, a loaf of bread, canned sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, 10 pounds of raw potatoes, a bag of apples and choice of dessert -- pumpkin pie, apple pie or ice cream.

"They drive through the garage and we have volunteers put everything in their trunks," Gaerig said. "It makes it real nice. Nobody has to carry a 14-pound turkey out to their car."

The Salvation Army's eastern Michigan division serves at least 11,000 meals Thanksgiving Day, about double the usual for a Thursday, said Russ Russell, executive director of development.

At the Lions' annual Thanksgiving game, Salvation Army workers and volunteers will collect coats and donations from fans at Ford Field.

Volunteers also will serve 3,000 Thanksgiving dinners at the Masonic Temple in Detroit, and more will serve dinner at Salvation Army shelters in five counties, from Macomb to Monroe. Most agencies have plenty of volunteers to help through the holidays, said John Kastler, vice president of programs at Gleaners.

"People need to be thinking, 'I can volunteer in January and February.' Believe me, their help will be as valued then as it is in November and December," Kastler said.

Contact **BILL LAITNER** at 248-351-3297.

Where you can eat

- On Thanksgiving Day, free turkey dinners will be served at dozens of sites around metro Detroit.
For locations, call the United Way's emergency food link at 800-552-1183, 8:30-4:30 weekdays.
To help the hungry in southeast Michigan, you can make a donation online or mail a check to charities such as these:
- Salvation Army, eastern Michigan division. To donate, go to www.redkettlecampaign.org or mail to 16130 Northland Drive, Southfield 48075.
- Gleaners Community Food Bank. Go to www.gcfb.org or mail to 2131 Beaufait, Detroit 48207.
- Capuchin Soup Kitchen. Go to www.cskdetroit.org or mail to 1820 Mt. Elliott, Detroit 48207.

We'll list meal sites

- The Free Press will list places providing free Thanksgiving meals to needy people. To be included, please send us an e-mail or fax including:
 - The name and address of the sponsor.
 - The name of a contact and a daytime phone number.
 - The date and time meals will be served and whether transportation will be provided.
- The fax number is 313-222-5981 and the e-mail address is jheard@freepress.com.
Information will not be taken over the telephone.

Groups prepare holiday food Thanksgiving meals will be available for everyone

Monday, November 21, 2005

BY SCOTT DANIEL

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Life isn't easy for Erma Lathum. The 80-year-old Ypsilanti Township resident is blind and lives on her own. While she can and does do many things for herself, cooking is a real chore. For one day at least, Lathum will be able to rest easy and enjoy a good Thanksgiving dinner. Meals on Wheels will bring her turkey with all the trimmings Thursday.

"It's a comfort to know that you have something like that coming in," Lathum said. "It takes all the pressure off of you."

Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels, which has been operating out of the First Baptist Church on Cross Street since 1974, delivers about 65,000 meals a year. Program Administrator Kathy Shelton said that includes more than 200 meals a day to homebound seniors and the disabled under age 60. Monday through Saturday, four groups of volunteers deliver a noon-time meal. For Thanksgiving, those four routes mushroom to 20-28, Shelton said.

"We break it down so our volunteers have more time to spend with them," she said. "For some, this might be their only social contact."

About 170 meals will be delivered Thursday, Shelton said. All of the nonprofit organization's meals are prepared by Eastern Michigan University's Hoyt Conference Center kitchen staff. Meals on Wheels does more than just deliver food.

"We check on our clients every day," Shelton said. "If they're not there when we arrive, we will call their emergency contacts to make sure they're OK."

Lathum has received help from Meals on Wheels for about four years. Carolyn Robinette, a neighbor at the Clark Road East Apartments, delivers food to Lathum and about 20 other residents.

"I do enjoy it," said Robinette, a Meals volunteer for more than six years. "I get to meet a lot of people. If they need me, I'm there for them."

Lathum describes Robinette as a real friend. Besides delivering her food, Robinette has taken her shopping on occasion.

"I love her," Lathum said. "She's a good person. She always takes time to find out how I'm doing."

She still does her own grocery shopping. But living on a very fixed income, Meals On Wheels helps her make ends meet, Lathum said.

"They bring good food," she said. "Usually, I love the vegetables. I'm not a big meat-eater."

Meals On Wheels isn't the only organization lending a helping hand this Thanksgiving.

The Ypsilanti Area Jaycees created food baskets for the holiday.

President Darlene Dresch said the state's sluggish economy has had an effect on donations and made putting the baskets together more difficult.

"Our fundraising efforts are not what they've been in the past," she said. "But we are still helping families who are in need."

The Jaycees delivered about 100 Thanksgiving baskets Saturday. The baskets included many traditional items such as potatoes, rolls, fruit, vegetables and desert.

"When we come, we bring enough food for a week," Dresch said. "Cereal, soup, pancake mix, macaroni and cheese. They have everything they need."

The Jaycees spend between \$8,000 and \$10,000 on food for the holiday each year, including \$1,000 on turkeys, Dresch said. The group also takes donations from local schools.

For Ypsilanti's Salvation Army, feeding the needy is a year-round calling.

Free meals are provided four times a week at 9 S. Park St. Maj. John Klammer said more people tend to come near the end of the month when assistance benefits run out.

"We're seeing more and more people," he said. "I think we've seen some new people because of hurricanes Katrina and Rita."

Klammer expects to feed Thanksgiving meals to 75-100 people Wednesday. "Anybody who's hungry can get a meal."

Scott Daniel can be reached at sdaniel@annarbornews.com or (734) 482-4685.

Thanksgiving meals

Monday, November 21, 2005

A number of area organizations will be serving free Thanksgiving dinners this week including:

The Salvation Army will have turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, green bean casserole and cranberry sauce at 9 S. Park St., from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Wednesday. To volunteer or make a donation, please contact Maj. John Klammer at (734) 482-4700.

Holy Trinity Church at 511 W. Forest Ave. will hold its traditional luncheon from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Thanksgiving Day, Thursday. To donate food or money, please call (734) 482-1400.

Dimitri's Kitchen, 11511 Belleville Road, will hold its traditional dinner starting at 4 p.m. Wednesday. The restaurant served about 1,700 people a year ago. To volunteer or make a donation, call (734) 699-7555.

Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels will deliver Thanksgiving dinners to about 170 homebound and disabled residents from 10 a.m.-noon. While it is too late to volunteer for Thanksgiving, the organization is looking for meal delivery help for Christmas and New Year's Day. Please call (734) 487-9669.

Published November 21, 2005

Dozier: Kiwanis to deliver food baskets this week

By Vickki Dozier
Lansing State Journal

For the third year in a row, Kiwanis Club of Lansing members are purchasing and preparing Thanksgiving food baskets for residents of two Lansing housing centers.

Club members will visit the Hildebrand Housing Center at 3122 Turner St. from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. today. On Tuesday, they'll visit the LaRoy Froh Housing Center at 2400 Reo Road from 10 a.m. to noon.

Club members will assemble and distribute baskets filled with turkeys and trimmings for Thanksgiving meals at both sites. This year, the club expects its baskets to provide more than 400 meals.

Advertisement

"We always get good participation from our members for this project," said Clarence Smith, the club's coordinator of the effort. "It is a good example of the many ways we help the Lansing community."

The Kiwanis Club of Lansing meets at noon every Thursday at the Salvation Army building, 525 N. Pennsylvania Ave. The public is welcome to attend and membership is encouraged.

Eaton food program targets seniors

Eaton Federal Savings Bank and Elder Law of Michigan have brought a program to Eaton County to make it easier for senior citizens to sign up for Michigan's Food Assistance Program (known to many as food stamps) and other public benefits.

Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly (MiCAFE) Program lets people age 60 and older apply for assistance in comfortable and familiar settings while receiving help from trained volunteers.

If eligibility for seniors in Eaton County is consistent with the eligibility for seniors in other counties, it is anticipated that MiCAFE will bring an average of \$60 per month in food benefits to each eligible household.

The Eaton Area Senior Center and the Eaton Rapids Medical Center will offer the MiCAFE program. More sites are possible in the future.

The Detroit News

November 20, 2005

Pontiac

Project helps seniors during holiday

The Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency is sponsoring its annual Adopt-A-Senior for Thanksgiving Project, which will run through Wednesday. The objective of the project is to provide food for low-income seniors who would not have a bountiful Thanksgiving without community support. The needed donations include small turkeys, stewing chickens, small frozen hams, canned goods, potatoes, cakes, pies or gift certificates to local grocers. For information, call (248) 209-2644.

Clacks' annual dinner kicks off area feasts for those in need

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, November 21, 2005

By Marlon Vaughn

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GENESEE COUNTY - The Rev. Cynthia Stribling of International World Harvest Church started serving big Thanksgiving dinners for friends, family members and people she didn't know more than a decade ago.

She did so partially as a way to fill the void left when she lost three children in a house fire about 10 years earlier.

This year, she expects to spend the holiday with more than 100 people.

"Sometimes people don't have anyone to spend the holidays with," said Stribling, whose Mt. Morris Township church is one of several area organizations sponsoring free, open-to-the-public Thanksgiving dinners this year. International World Harvest's dinner begins at 3 p.m. Thursday.

"I've had people who come saying they want to volunteer, but they really just don't want to be lonely," Stribling said.

Some are lonely and in need of company. Others are seniors who don't want to or can't prepare a big feast. Many are those in need of assistance, particularly as the sour Michigan economy continues to displace workers from big local employers such as Delphi Corp. All are welcome at the area's Thanksgiving dinners, organizers said.

"We serve anybody that comes in," said Glenda Lang, director of family services for Carriage Town Ministries, which hosts its dinner at 11 a.m. Thursday.

Carriage Town served dinners to about 150 people last year. Lang expects more this year with the struggling economy and the recent closing of the Fisher Hotel, which served as transitional housing for about 20 people.

The slate of dinners gets started as usual Tuesday with the annual event sponsored by state Rep. Brenda Clack, D-Flint, and husband Floyd, a former Genesee County commissioner. Now in its 25th year, the dinner at Foss Avenue Baptist Church hosts more than 300 people.

"We're going to try to bring back some of the people who helped me put it together 25 years ago," said Floyd Clack, mentioning state Sen. Deborah Cherry, D-Burton, Union Printing owner Lewis Driskell and Mt. Morris Township Supervisor Larry Foster among those who helped get it going.

"We wanted to try to do something a little special this year."

The Clacks' dinner will feature performances by high school choirs. The entertainment begins at 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner at 11 a.m.

The North End Soup Kitchen will host a dinner at 11:30 a.m. Thursday.

QUICK TAKE

Thanksgiving dinners

Tuesday 11 A.M.:
Floyd and Brenda Clack's

Thanksgiving dinner at Foss Avenue Baptist Church, 1185 E. Foss Ave., Flint. Entertainment begins at 10:30 a.m.

Thursday 11 A.M.:
Carriage Town Ministries, 605 Garland St., Flint. 11:30 A.M.: North End Soup Kitchen, 735 E. Stewart Ave., Flint. 3 P.M.:

International World Harvest Church, 1478 W. Mt. Morris Road, Mt. Morris Township. Transportation: (810) 230-2652.

Cupboard's nearly bare

Post-Katrina, pickings are slim at Food Bank

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, November 20, 2005

By Kristin Longley

klongley@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6249

First in a series

FLINT - Look at the shelves of the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan and you can see Hurricane Katrina ravaged more than just the Gulf Coast.

By the end of October, two months after the storm struck New Orleans, the food bank's warehouse was bare. More than 200,000 pounds of food ordinarily distributed to local pantries were instead sent south for Katrina victims. Shipments by food suppliers also lagged as items were diverted to the Gulf Coast.

Even though the organization slowly is getting back up to speed, shelves are empty where hundreds of boxes of cereal, rice and other essential food items normally would be spilling off wooden flats and overflowing into aisles.

What the food bank's leader calls an "emergency situation" couldn't have come at a worse time. Besides Katrina, there's also an expected rise in demand from Delphi Corp. workers and retirees hurt by the company's bankruptcy woes, plus possible cuts in the nation's food stamp program.

"This is the emptiest our warehouse has ever been in the past 11 years," said food bank President Bill Kerr at the organization's offices at 2312 Lapeer Road. "I don't in any way say that product shouldn't have gone to that area (New Orleans), but in the same breath I'm not going to diminish the need here in our community."

On Nov. 30, the food bank kicks off its annual month-long fund-raising campaign, Face of Hunger. Its goal is ambitious: \$500,000. That surpasses last year's campaign, at a time when most nonprofits are struggling in fundraising, but the food bank is setting its sights higher to get food to the people who need it. The Face of Hunger strikes a special chord with local folks; it has set records every year since 1997.

Contributions - from loose change deposited in envelopes distributed by The Flint Journal to large-scale corporate donations - help support the organization's operating costs and programs. Envelopes will be in the Dec. 2 Flint Journal.

Since a \$1 donation can be converted into \$14 worth of food, this year's goal translates into about \$7 million worth of product.

And for agencies such as the Bristol Road Church of Christ in Flint Township, the more product the better.

Patronage at the church pantry has more than doubled in the past two years. And since Hurricane Katrina, leaders of the church's HIS Ministry (for Hands in Service) have noticed a drastic decrease in the variety of products available at the food bank.

The pantry has had to rely more heavily on outside donations from organizations such as the Genesee County Community Action Resource Department.

String beans and peas used to be plentiful, but pantry Director Dana Eubank said they haven't been available for three months, since the storm hit.

"We try to provide people with well-rounded, supplemental food," Eubank said. "These people need a hand up."

Brenda Cross, a Burton mother with epilepsy, has had more trouble providing for her 7-year-old son than ever before and has noticed the impact Katrina had on the pantry.

She visits it every month for a box of food loaded with rice, macaroni and cheese and other items that help reduce her cost of living.

"It really helps me out a lot because I have to feed my growing son," said Cross, who is unable to work and receives Social Security payments. "But lately I've had to buy more stuff from the store."

Eubank said he hopes the food bank will recover soon, but decreased supplies, coupled with increased local need, does not bode well.

"The best-case scenario is that a large portion of the workforce will see a reduction of income," Kerr said. "The ripple effect will be tremendous and the food bank will be relied on more."

Thirty-year Delphi employee Vernita Coleman, of Flint, predicted all local charitable organizations are going to be hit hard because of the corporation's bankruptcy.

"For the people who can't retire or put away money, they're really going to need the help," said Coleman, who hopes to retire soon and is worried about her Delphi pension. "It's not an 'if this will happen,' it's a 'when.'"

Adding to the food bank's crisis is a possible cut in food stamps. There is an effort in the U.S. House to cut \$844 million, which would eliminate about 300,000 people from the program nationally.

Michigan is one of the top ten states for distributing food stamps, said Sarah Waelde, director of programs and agency relations at the food bank. In early 2004, more than 915,000 were receiving them in the state.

"The private, nonprofit sector is expected to fill in," Waelde said. "This would be really hard on us."

Kerr said the Delphi and food stamp situations, coupled with local economic woes, is terrifying. However, the food bank - helped by the Face of Hunger campaign - will continue to help everyone it can.

"Walking down the warehouse aisles during this difficult time is hard," he said. "But if you don't take care of your own family, who will?"

Published November 21, 2005

Keeping warm expected to be even costlier Gas heating bills to leap 47% over '04, state says

By Barbara Wieland
Lansing State Journal

The prices might be dropping at the pump, but they're inching up at the thermostat.

Lisa Dewan of East Lansing says she's already seen her heating bill come in higher for October.

"We might have to go into our savings or cut the entertainment funds," said Dewan, an elementary school teacher who provides for her three children with her husband, also a teacher. "We won't be able to save as much."

Home heating bills are anticipated to be even higher this winter than predicted.

The Michigan Public Service Commission now expects a 47 percent increase in the average home heating bill. Utility companies are asking the commission to allow them to bill at higher rates.

Last month, the commission predicted bills would climb 46 percent.

Natural gas prices are rising nationwide, and utilities sell gas at-cost to customers.

"Utilities make no profit on the commodity," said Judy Palnau, spokeswoman for the commission. "When they pay more, customers pay more."

Natural gas prices spiked after hurricanes Katrina and Rita shut down refineries in the Gulf Coast region.

Natural gas is used for heat in 80 percent of Michigan homes.

The Public Service Commission hasn't given a decision on Consumers Energy's request. Consumers is the largest local supplier of natural gas.

If Consumers' request is granted, the average home heating bill will be \$183 a month.

"The typical homeowner can expect to pay \$40 to \$50 more than last year," Consumers spokesman Dan Bishop said.

But that's better than some Michigan residents can expect. The anticipated monthly bill for MichCon customers, for example, will be \$207, Palnau said.

Bishop said help is available to people who can't pay their heating bill.

Staff writer Hannah Northey contributed to this report. Contact Barbara Wieland at 267-1348 or bwieland@lsj.com.

Michigan Report

November 18, 2005

M.S.H.D.A. APPROVES \$10 MILLION IN HOUSING AID

Michigan State Housing Development Authority Michael DeVos announced Friday that \$10 million in federal and state assistance will go toward setting up permanent supportive housing programs for the chronically homeless in eight communities in the state.

Communities receiving the funds are Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, Detroit, Flint, Lansing, Muskegon, Pontiac and Saginaw.

These communities were chosen based on the number of chronically homeless; the number of existing shelter beds, number of bed nights, and capacity to meet the need; and poverty levels within the community. It is estimated that 6,000-8,000 Michigan residents are considered chronically homeless.

“Over the years, many innovative programs have been created around the state to address the housing and service needs of Michigan's poorest citizens – homeless individuals and families – for the first time, communities and the state are working together in a coordinated way to end homelessness in our state,” Mr. DeVos said in a statement.

“Through this collaboration of state agencies, local governments, and service providers, we can provide the poorest members of society with housing, services, and needed income supports and work toward the goal of eliminating chronic homelessness in Michigan.”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2005

More than 12,000 Jobs Announced this Week

Governor Highlights Efforts to Create and Retain Jobs Across the State

LANSING – In her weekly radio address, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced a new wave of job creation in Michigan, highlighting her administration's efforts to attract new businesses, retain existing jobs, and create new jobs across Michigan.

"By convincing these businesses to stay and grow in Michigan, and by luring new businesses to Michigan, we're preserving jobs and creating jobs that pay the bills, put food on the table, and support so many families and children across our state," Granholm said.

Granholm announced yesterday that her administration is accelerating over \$600 million in needed road and infrastructure building projects. The projects are part of her Jobs Today Initiative and will put 11,000 people to work.

Nine companies recently announced they will invest almost half a billion dollars in Michigan's economy, creating and retaining more than 1,500 jobs. These companies include Cobra Sport Inc. which is relocating its motorcycle manufacturing plant from Ohio to Hillsdale, Michigan, and Hemlock Semiconductors which is expanding its Saginaw County facility over a competing site in Kentucky.

During jobs missions to Germany one year ago and to Japan this past summer, Granholm helped convince more than a dozen overseas companies to create some 2,000 jobs across the state. The Governor once again urged the Legislature to pass a bipartisan package to create jobs now so that announcements like those made this week can continue.

"I have continued to push, to prod, to insist the Legislature pass a bipartisan job creation package, a package which I outlined last February," Granholm said in her address. "My administration is committed to going anywhere, anytime to bring jobs and investment home to Michigan."

The Governor's weekly radio address is released each Friday at 10:00 a.m. and may be heard on broadcast stations across that state through an affiliation with the Michigan Association of Broadcasters. The address will also be available on the Governor's Website on Mondays as a podcast for general distribution to personal MP3 players and home computers.

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Michigan Report

November 18, 2005

WELFARE CASELOADS RISE IN OCTOBER

Cash assistance welfare caseloads were up slightly in October to 78,534, from 77,866 cases in September, said a report from the Department of Human Services.

The number of people represented by those cases also increased to 212,813 in October from 211,402 people in September.

The department has held steady for some months with about 34 percent of targeted cash assistance cases having some earned income, 57 percent exempt from work requirements and about 13 percent having exceeded the 60-month limit on federal assistance.

Food assistance cases continued to climb to 497,814, up from 491,274 cases in September. Caseloads in that program have been climbing steadily through 2005.

While cash and food assistance cases increased, the number of childcare assistance cases saw a decline in October. That program had 62,958 cases, down from 63,794 cases in September. The October cases represented 119,688 children.

Scavenger hunter now faces trial, \$44,000 in unpaid child support

Saturday, November 19, 2005

By John S. Hausman

MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A Fruitport Township man who walked into a police station in costume despite facing two felony warrants is headed for trial for failure to pay child support, with the unpaid bills totalling more than \$44,000.

Louis Daniel Jasick III, 34, of 3249 Maplewood waived his scheduled preliminary examination Friday, and visiting 60th District Judge Richard Pasarela ordered him bound over to 14th Circuit Court for trial. Pasarela also rejected a prosecution motion to increase Jasick's bond from \$2,000 personal recognizance in each case to \$2,000 cash or surety in each case.

According to Friend of the Court records, Jasick owes more than \$26,700 for the support of one child and nearly \$17,500 for another, each by a different mother. Those totals include several thousand dollars owed the state of Michigan for reimbursement of past Medicaid expenses.

Jasick's arrest was one of the year's odder police tales.

The evening of Nov. 5, Jasick and a woman companion showed up at the Fruitport Township Police station, 6543 Airline, wearing Halloween costumes -- in Jasick's case, a long wig and a "KISS" T-shirt. Jasick told the two officers present that they were on a scavenger hunt, and part of their mission was to get a picture of "a cop eating a doughnut."

The officers were planning to play along until Jasick told one of them he remembered the officer from high school. Jasick volunteered his own name, and the other officer then recognized Jasick's name from a flier that had just been posted the day before on the station bulletin board.

Jasick was wanted on two felony warrants for failing to pay child support.

The officers invited him into the police station and then arrested him

Wayne briefs

DEARBORN HEIGHTS

Cox hires child support advocate

Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox has appointed City Councilwoman Catherine Heise as a special assistant attorney general. She will help prosecute felony child support cases on behalf of the state. More than \$2 billion in back support is owed to Michigan children. Heise, 45, has more than 16 years of legal and courtroom experience.

Donations down, program jeopardized

Children's Christmas shopping trip for their families may be eliminated

Sunday, November 20, 2005

By Ben Lando
Special to the Gazette

COMSTOCK -- There may be one less holiday tradition in Comstock this year.

The Kids' Christmas Party for 100 of the area's less privileged first-, second- and third-graders is in need of \$3,500 before the Dec. 3 event or the children's shopping trip may be eliminated.

For the past 24 years, the children, accompanied by 100 volunteers, get breakfast early in the morning at the Comstock Community Center and then go to a local store to shop. When they come back to the center to wrap the gifts, Santa Claus is waiting for them.

``It's one of the most exciting events of the whole year," said Judy Savoy, event organizer and senior program and marketing director at the center.

The children chosen to participate are identified by Comstock and Galesburg-Augusta schools and local social-work agencies and their names are given to the community center.

Each child is paired up with a buddy -- a high school or college student volunteer or another community member. When the children go shopping it isn't for themselves; it's to find a present for their siblings or parents. Savoy particularly remembers her buddy three years ago.

She was a 7-year-old girl whose father died in a car accident three months earlier.

The girl decided to buy two angel ornaments, one for her mother and one for her grandmother, so they could be closer to her father -- a perfect example of the spirit of the program, Savoy said.

``It's not just about getting," she said. ``They take so much care to pick out the right gift for their family" -- a family who might otherwise not get gifts for Christmas.

This year, with only half of the necessary \$7,000 raised for the event, the shopping portion of the event may have to be eliminated.

``We will be doing breakfast at the center, and they still get to see Santa," Savoy said. ``But they won't get to shop for gifts for their family."

Savoy said the reduced number of donations is affecting other activities the center puts on, too -- like gift baskets to senior citizens and the adopt-a-family program.

She attributes the downturn to charity people have given to recent emergencies such as the Asian tsunami last December, the Oct. 8 earthquake in Pakistan and India, and Hurricane Katrina this past August.

``Plus, the economic pressures on us right now, the need goes up and the ability to stretch is challenged even more," she said.

That's even more of a reason the Kids' Christmas Party needs to happen for the 25th year, she said.

``The children give to others, the volunteers give to the children and the community gives back to the community," Savoy said. ``It's a pulse that needs to keep beating."

Warm the Children

Ann Arbor News

Sunday, November 20, 2005

What: A program sponsored by The News that uses reader donations to buy winter clothing for needy children. The News pays all administrative costs, so a dollar donated is a dollar for a child.
When: Each autumn.

To get involved: Donate, volunteer as a shopper or organize projects around the program.

Projects this year include:

- The Washtenaw Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors holds golf outings, and for the past five or six years has split the money between Warm the Children and the Huron Valley Boys & Girls Club. Association Treasurer Len Coleman said the group hopes to boost the Warm the Children split to \$1,500 next summer.

- Management Recruiters of Kalamazoo also ran a golf outing last summer, for all its branches, including Ann Arbor. They raised \$200 for Warm the Children.

To donate: Send a check to Warm the Children, c/o The Ann Arbor News, P.O. Box 1147, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1147.

A donor slip can be found today on page E2.

For more information: Call

(734) 994-6733 or go online to www.mlive.com/aanews/warm/

Dad warmly remembered Memorial donations will buy winter wear for kids

Sunday, November 20, 2005

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

When Richard Lovernick Sr. died in July at the age of 79, his family reeled at the loss of a quiet, generous, loving man who never declared a mission to help children but somehow always did. They considered memorials for the American Red Cross or the Humane Society. But they weren't the perfect fit.

Then it hit them: something Dad would be proud to support - the Ann Arbor News Warm the Children program.

The memorials requested by Dick Lovernick's wife, Helen, son Richard "Rick" Jr. and daughters Mary Pat Holst and Ann Litzler have so far come to more than \$700. At \$80 a child, that comes to just about nine kids who will get coats, hats, gloves, mittens, boots, pajamas and underwear. And if they're old enough, the children will get to help choose what could be the first new winter clothing they've ever had.

The Lovernick fund happened because of all the little moments in Dick Lovernick's life.

Dick and Helen Lovernick used to give money to Holst, for what Holst called her coat closet in Ypsilanti Public Schools, where she worked for 16 years as a teacher consultant.

Holst, now with Dexter schools, would spot a child with no winter clothes and quietly pull out a coat she had bought with money from family and others who donated.

When Warm the Children was launched nine winters ago, she asked people to send donations to that program instead. "It provided our kids with coats, hats and mittens immediately. It was absolutely effective," she said.

Rick Lovernick voted for Warm the Children because of all the moments he suspects a lot of other fathers raised their voices but his father never did. For the moments when Dad was invoked by his children, when the grandchildren did something untoward. All it took to bring the grandchildren in line was the question: "Do you want me to tell Grandpa?" And for the moments in which Rick had a problem as a kid. Any problem.

Because with Dad, "it never was a problem," Rick Lovernick said. "It was a situation seeking a solution. It was never insurmountable."

Litzler offers not so much a moment, but her father's philosophy.

"He just got life, that kids were important and that they are our future, that they are sponges who soak up knowledge. That's what he saw in children - their potential, that they make a difference. That everyone should have a good life. That everyone's the same."

Last Christmas, Litzler said, the adults in the family started making donations to Warm the Children rather than give each other gifts. Dick Lovernick had just started slowing down.

Lovernick was a little guy, maybe 5-foot-6, an engineer who followed his job at Chrysler from Redford Township to Ann Arbor, then to Alabama, before he retired and moved back to Ann Arbor.

His small, forgetful moments began a year ago, then they snowballed.

The family gathered for the Fourth of July. On July 6, up at Rick's cottage near Frankfurt, Dick Lovernick had a nice, quiet day on the family pontoon boat. The next day, his days and nights confused, he lay down to sleep. He never woke. He died July 11.

The family remains stricken. But that's not what they want to think about. They think now about his legacy. His children, grandchildren. And about nine kids.

Nine toasty-warm kids.

It's simple to get involved in Warm the Children.

"You don't have to be involved in doing a ton. If your heart's in the right place, that's a start," Litzler said.

"It's a shame there are kids who freeze, who don't have coats, and others have a closet full they forget they have," Litzler said.

Adds Coleman, "There shouldn't be any child out there who's cold ... That's where you start."

Susan Oppat can be reached at soppat@annarbornews.com or at (734) 482-1166.

The face of charity grows ever younger

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, November 21, 2005

By Kristin Longley

klongley@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6249

Second in a series

GENESEE COUNTY - Whether it's auctioning off an old Game Boy or pleading with an older brother for loose coins, local children are eager put their two cents in to fight hunger. More schools than ever have approached the Flint-based Food Bank of Eastern Michigan offering to hold drives and fundraisers this year, said Susie Laidler, development manager for the Flint-based nonprofit.

It's a sign of the subtle shift the food bank has seen in community service - it's no longer just groups and working adults who contribute to efforts to help those in need.

In this age of Katrina and other disasters, kids seem to be understanding at a younger age the concept of helping others and coming to the aid of the less fortunate.

Kelsea Drzewiecki, a seventh-grader at Holy Family Catholic School, said she went on a frantic hunt for change to donate to the Grand Blanc school's penny war for the food bank.

"I even searched the floor under mats and stuff," the 12-year-old said. "But that was after I made sure to check the couch cushions, the car and everywhere else."

The food bank kicks off its annual Face of Hunger campaign Nov. 30. Its goal is \$500,000.

Collection envelopes will be in the Dec. 2 Flint Journal.

Since a \$1 donation can be converted into \$14 worth of food, this year's goal translates into about \$7 million worth of product.

Area kids will help in small ways to reach that \$500,000 figure.

In general, children are very open and generous, Laidler said, so when they see someone who's hurting, they want to help.

"They love being little helpers, and they like to know they're important," she said. "That's why it's so great to work with kids -it's fun to see how much they inspire other people."

The seventh- and eighth-graders at Holy Family competed to raise the most money for a jeans day, a reward that breaks the monotony of wearing a uniform every day.

But even more significant to the students was that the number of people asking for help in their neighborhood has doubled in the past year.

"It could be right among you and you don't even know it," Kelsea said. "Kids like us go hungry, too."

To make their donation to the food bank more special to the students, the money they raise will go toward holiday boxes for families in the Grand Blanc area.

Last year's penny drive provided for 48 of the total number of boxes the school sent out, said Jack Daunt, deacon at Holy Family. This year, the school doubled the number of participating classes to accommodate the twice as many families coming to the parish for help, he said.

Besides Holy Family's efforts, students at Hahn Intermediate School in Davison have held an annual toy auction for years to help the food bank.

Teachers ask students to root around in closets and basements for toys, games and stuffed animals that don't get much use anymore, said teacher Chuck Flowers, who organizes the auction.

In December, the toys will be auctioned off, with a \$5 maximum bid on each item, among the students who participated in the fundraiser.

Salvation Army hopes to ring up goal

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, November 19, 2005

By Kristin Longley

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GENESEE COUNTY - Despite more people needing help and less available resources, Salvation Army of Genesee County representatives are optimistic about this year's \$600,000 holiday campaign goal.

Last year, the campaign got off to a rocky start when Target banned holiday bell ringers from its stores nationwide. Salvation Army officials said retaliation to the ban may have accounted for 2004's tally of \$638,024, well over the \$550,000 goal.

But this year, officials aren't as hopeful about what the ban on bell ringers may bring.

"Target is a history point with us now - we've moved on from them and looked at other sites," said Capt. John Williams, Salvation Army county commander. "I think people are still concerned about what they did, and that may give us more funds, but overall I think the ban will still be more detrimental to our campaign this year."

And the blow from Target isn't the only obstacle the campaign must overcome. Williams said more people are coming to the Salvation Army for the first time for help. This year's challenge will be to assist as many "working poor" with utility costs and shelter needs as possible, he said.

Another big challenge is the money people have donated toward national disaster relief, said Ginger Virkler, Flint Journal advertising operations manager and this year's Salvation Army Advisory Board chairwoman.

"Hopefully, people will still have the resources to donate to Genesee County this year," Virkler said. "There's a big need here, too."

Obstacles aside, the mood was light at the campaign's kickoff Friday at the Courtland Center in Burton.

The Citadel Band Retirees played holiday music before Williams and Virkler announced this year's goal and unveiled one of the world's largest Salvation Army red kettles. For a \$1 donation, you can guess how much the kettle and its trailer weigh to win a prize.

The six campaign co-chairs, Brenda Brissette Mata and Andrew Heller of the Flint Journal; Karen Gatlin and Michael J. Thorp from WJRT (Channel 12); and Rod Prahin and Chris Pavelich from WCRZ-FM, spoke about the need for volunteers in the area, and took turns ringing a bell for donations.

Red kettles are located at many businesses in Genesee County, including the Courtland Center and the Genesee Valley shopping center.

QUICK TAKE

How to help

There are several ways to sign up to volunteer for the Salvation Army of Genesee County.

Visit the Web site at

www.ringbells.org.

Call Genesee

County command at (810) 232-2196.

State targets welfare 'trap'

Sunday, November 20, 2005

By Pat Shellenbarger and Sharon Emery
The Grand Rapids Press

The job interview went well enough the other day, but then the employer told Martell Hughes there was one possible hitch: She doesn't have a telephone.

"I can't afford a phone until I get a job," Hughes said later. "If I get a phone, I gotta eliminate the gas or electric."

Hughes, a single mother of six boys, is caught in a trap that ensnares many others. Nearly a decade after Congress passed a welfare reform package requiring recipients to work or at least look for employment, many remain trapped between public assistance and low-paying jobs.

"You try so hard to get off, and you can't," said Hughes, 39. "Instead of making us better, it's keeping us in the same spot. You don't want to be on aid. You work for \$6.25 an hour -- come on, you can't do it. We need more jobs that pay more, because if they pay more, I can get off the system."

The federal welfare reform law, passed in 1996, removed millions from the nation's welfare rolls, including about 400,000 through Michigan's Work First program. But 211,400 people, including children, remain on welfare in Michigan. That includes 50,367 who have been receiving public assistance for four years or longer.

With Michigan's welfare-to-work law set to expire Dec. 31, Gov. Jennifer Granholm's administration and Republican legislators are working on plans to replace it. While neither plan is in its final form, both are aimed at encouraging more recipients to leave welfare and land jobs. The difference is in how they get there. During budget negotiations last summer, state House Republicans suggested recipients should lose their welfare benefits after four years. The Granholm administration is adamant that benefits continue indefinitely, as long as the recipient is complying with the program's requirements.

"What we learned from Work First is that it's not enough to just get a job," said Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. "Our clients clearly need help getting stabilized for longer periods of time."

"Those who have been in the system the longest have significant barriers to independence. It's not enough to say ... that they're not motivated enough and we need to throw them off the rolls." Hughes said she gladly would give up welfare for a job. Every weekday morning, she reports to the Work First program, scans the bulletin board for job openings, then makes the rounds, filling out at least four applications a day.

"McDonald's is accepting applications," she said. "I go there and apply. They're not gonna hire me. I don't have any experience." Pregnant at 16, married at 17 and now single, Hughes struggles to feed, clothe and house her four youngest sons who live with her. She has held a few part-time jobs as a home health aid and nursing home aide, but lost the last in a disagreement with her boss.

On and off

While the Work First program offers incentives for recipients to find work, most end up back on the welfare rolls, Udow said. Half who leave welfare are back within a year, she said. For those who have been on cash assistance for more than four years, the return rate is even higher: nearly 70 percent.

Udow's department proposes replacing Work First with a new program to help recipients become self sufficient through Jobs, Education and Training (JET).

But State Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming, warned last month that, while the social safety net is designed to help people until they become self-sufficient, it's time "to make sure that safety net hasn't taken on a larger role than was ever intended."

The debate centers on the long-term recipient who continues to languish on \$459 a month for a mother and two children, the typical Family Independence Program (FIP) household.

Those are the people Republicans targeted with their proposal to cut off assistance after four years. An eight-member legislative work group, heavily weighted with Republicans, was appointed last month to find ways to move those recipients off welfare and into jobs.

"We need to reform our laws so that able-bodied people become more self-sufficient and are not dependent on welfare for a lifetime," said Rep. Jerry Kooiman, R-Grand Rapids, who co-chairs the group.

The group's recommendations are expected to be included in bills to be introduced this week.

The Republicans favor progressive sanctions for the recipients who don't comply with the work requirements, and they want to target people suspected of "gaming the system" by falsely claiming they are disabled.

Udow agreed that "there do need to be sanctions to get the motivation going, because some may not want to work."

The Granholm administration's proposed JET program would provide more education, training and support services for recipients, but also would include sanctions for those who don't comply with the work requirements.

The plan also would create a short-term family support program to keep 10 percent of families experiencing temporary difficulties from returning to the welfare rolls. They would receive a one-time, lump sum payment equal to three times their monthly FIP grant.

'How could I survive?'

Udow hopes to have pilot programs up and running early next year in Detroit and Kent, Sanilac and Oakland counties, where 22 additional caseworkers will provide more intensive services for some 5,600 families.

"If they cut me off, how could I survive?" Hughes asked.

The roughly \$600 a month she receives barely covers the \$500 rent on the small, West Side apartment where she and her four sons live. All their clothing and household furnishings, even the nebulizer 5-year-old Deangelo uses to control his asthma, were donated by In-the-Image, the South Division Avenue charity where Hughes volunteers several hours a week.

One evening last week, before leaving for her kids' parent-teacher conferences, Hughes dished up plates of spaghetti.

She receives food stamps and prepares meals, such as chili, that can stretch over several days.

"You make gumbo or goulash," she said. "You just pour things in a pot and make it. Kids don't discriminate. Whatever fills their belly, they're happy."

Even if Hughes lands a job, chances are it will not pay enough to take her completely off welfare.

"That's the problem with the economy now," she said. "They're giving us jobs, but only giving us part-time jobs and sticking you with the system. You can take it or leave it. I'm the type of person who takes it.

"I don't want to be on the system at all. All I want is a full-time job that pays enough that gets us away from the system."

Welfare changes due by Dec. 31

Monday, November 21, 2005

SHARON EMERY SAGINAW NEWS LANSING BUREAU and ERIN ALBERTY THE SAGINAW NEWS

LANSING -- Getting a job isn't the problem for Glenn G. Brown. Neither is keeping one. "I've never been unemployed," the Saginaw 49-year-old said while picking up his monthly \$84 check at the Michigan Works office, 310 Johnson.

The hard part is finding a job that will support both Brown and his 9-year-old daughter, Mariah. Brown, who makes about \$6 an hour working maintenance at the State Office Building at East Genesee and North Jefferson, has gone on and off the state's Family Independence Program since his daughter was born.

That makes Brown one of the long-term welfare recipients the state is trying to address in bills slated for introduction this week.

It's a problem that's bedeviled Congress, which has several times decided against overhauling the landmark 1996 welfare reform law that requires recipients to either work or prepare for work to receive cash assistance.

The politically popular policy removed millions of people from the nation's welfare rolls, including about 400,000 through Michigan's Work First.

In Saginaw County, the monthly caseload has dropped to 2,984 from 7,831 in 1990.

But nearly 78,000 Michigan households -- some 211,400 people, including children -- remain on the welfare rolls, with 5,990 children and 2,254 adult recipients in Saginaw County.

Some 13,500 households, including 920 in Saginaw County, have remained there four years or longer.

Enter Republican legislators and policymakers in the Democratic administration of Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm, who are hoping to craft a law when the state's welfare-to-work law expires Dec. 31.

"What we learned from Work First is that it's not enough to just get a job," said Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services.

Although there are incentives for welfare recipients to find a job for at least 90 days, most end up back on the rolls, she said. Her department has proposed a new program targeting long-term self-sufficiency -- Jobs, Education and Training -- to replace Work First.

"Our clients clearly need help getting stabilized for longer periods of time," Udow said.

Or, as House Republicans suggested during state budget negotiations last summer, they need to receive motivation from a benefit cutoff if they don't find and keep work after four years on welfare. The cutoff wasn't included in the final budget plan, but lawmakers are in the throes of crafting reforms that provide a mix of supports and sanctions.

There is general agreement on the need for better and more-immediate supports and programs: education, work-readiness, substance abuse treatment and life and social skills that can help people not only get jobs, but keep them.

The flash point clearly will come over the sanctions. While there is a five-year federal limit on cash assistance, 20 percent of Michigan's welfare caseload can remain longer due to the state's

stumbling economy. About 13 percent of Michigan's caseload exceeds the five-year limit, up from 10 percent in 2003.

Brown said officials shouldn't dismantle those economy-driven exceptions until the economy actually does improve.

"It'd probably be harmful," he said. "They've got to bring jobs back in the economy so people can work."

That's especially true here, agreed Randy R. Barst, executive director of the Saginaw County Department of Social Services.

"Obviously, everyone has to be held accountable, including people who receive public assistance," Barst said. "But one of the major things you need to look at is that the jobs picture in Saginaw is virtually nonexistent."

Barst pointed to Saginaw County's unemployment rate of 6.8 percent, higher than the state average by about half a percent.

"The competition for available jobs is fierce and, unfortunately, many of the people who have been on public assistance for four or (more) years really do have significant barriers to even very basic employment," he said.

The administration is adamant about continuing benefits indefinitely, as long as the person is in full compliance with program requirements.

"Those who have been in the system the longest have significant barriers to independence," Udow said. "It's not enough to say that they're not motivated enough and we need to throw them off the rolls."

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Published November 19, 2005

U.S. House spending cuts could hurt poor Bill less harsh than original; hits food stamps, Medicaid

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

A controversial budget-cutting plan that could throw thousands of people off food stamps and limit Medicaid access passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Friday with what many advocates say are only minimal changes from a previous version.

"It does virtually nothing to avert the incredible harm that could come as a result of this budget," said Sharon Parks of the Michigan League for Human Services, a nonprofit advocacy group.

The budget bill, passed by a vote of 217-215, would slice almost \$50 billion from the federal deficit over five years by curbing rapidly growing benefit programs such as Medicaid, food stamps and student loan subsidies.

Republicans said reining in programs whose costs rise automatically each year is the first step to restoring fiscal discipline.

"This unchecked spending is growing faster than our economy, faster than inflation, and far beyond our means to sustain it," said Budget Committee Chairman Jim Nussle, R-Iowa.

The bill now goes to a joint House-Senate conference committee.

Fate in Senate unclear

It's unclear whether the bill will pass muster in the Senate, which last week approved a milder version to curb the automatic growth of federal spending by \$35 billion through the end of the decade.

All Democrats opposed the bill that was voted on Friday. All of Michigan's Republican delegation supported it, including Reps. Joe Schwarz of Battle Creek and Vern Ehlers of Grand Rapids.

Both were part of a group of moderate Republican holdouts who earlier opposed the bill.

Schwarz issued a statement Friday saying he voted for the bill in hopes of changing it before final passage.

Some concessions were made to win approval.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., ordered modest concessions on plans to limit eligibility for food stamps and require the poorest Medicaid patients to pay more for their care.

He killed a provision to deny free school lunches to about 40,000 children whose parents would lose their food stamps.

The biggest concession was allowing food stamp recipients moving from welfare to work to continue to receive non-cash benefits for child care, transportation and housing without losing their nutrition benefits.

Despite the changes, much of the deficit-reduction bill remained intact.

The liberal-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated that the last-minute changes eased the cuts aimed at the poor by 2 percent compared with the original version.

"It's still a very, very serious impact," said Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, which oversees the Food Assistance Program.

The budget bill cuts \$700 million from the federal food stamp program by tightening eligibility rules for some working families and immigrants.

About 235,000 of the 26 million Americans receiving food stamps would lose benefits under the cut, according to one analysis.

Immigrants would have to live in the United States seven years instead of five years to gain benefits.

Udow said she had yet to determine how many Michigan residents could be kicked off the food stamp program.

Medicaid savings

On Medicaid, the bill would generate almost \$12 billion in savings through new cost-sharing burdens on beneficiaries and by letting states scale back coverage.

Parks, vice president for policy at the Michigan League for Human Services, said she worries states such as Michigan that are experiencing continued budget shortfalls could target Medicaid as an avenue for savings.

"Given the incredible pressures right now at the state level you never know what could happen," she said.

The Associated Press contributed to this story. Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or srange@lsj.com.

How they voted

- Dave Camp, R-Midland: Yes
- Vern Ehlers, R-Grand Rapids: Yes
- Mike Rogers, R-Brighton: Yes
- Joe Schwarz, R-Battle Creek: Yes

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Letters

November 20, 2005

Don't cut programs for poor

Once again we are subjected to the compassionate conservative thinking of Thomas Bray ("Beware of 'patriotic' increases in taxation," Nov. 6). Bray feels strongly that the best way to untangle the economic mess the Bush administration has precipitated is by a \$70 billion tax break to the rich, which the Republicans plan to push through this year, and no new taxes to pay down the national debt.

The Republican-run House and Senate were both about to make substantial cuts in Medicaid, Medicare, farm subsidies, food stamps and child support enforcement. Why is it always necessary to balance the budget on the backs of the weak, the ill, the poor and the elderly? Is it possible that they can't or don't vote Republican?

*James Frantz
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